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SUBJECT: BRAZILIAN DEFENSE MINISTER BRIEFS MERCOSUR
PARLIAMENT ON SOUTH AMERICAN DEFENSE COUNCIL

¶1. (U) This telegram is sensitive but unclassified, and not
for Internet distribution.

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Summary
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¶2. (U) Brazilian Defense Minister Nelson Jobim outlined
Brazil's vision for a South American Defense Council
(CODESUR) for Mercosur's parliament September 16 in
Montevideo. CODESUR will be a consensus-based body for
setting continent-wide defense policy, and Jobim claimed that
its impending establishment promises South America benefits
such as technological progress and a greater weight in
international fora. Jobim reported that all of South
America's heads of state now support the CODESUR idea.

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All Together Now
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¶3. (U) The Mercosur Parliament held a special session
September 16 to hear Brazilian Minister of Defense Nelson
Jobim explain the current status of and rationale behind
Brazil's plan for a South American Defense Council (CODESUR).
As Jobim described CODESUR, it will be a consensus-based
entity that sets South American defense policy. CODESUR will
not be a traditional military alliance, Jobim stressed,
saying it will be "nothing like NATO." Participating
countries will always retain full control over their armed
forces, Jobim added.

¶4. (U) Jobim argued that a coordinated South American defense
policy has three advantages. First, it will protect a region
that is attractive to outsiders due to its food production
capabilities, availability of fresh water, and potential as a
source of energy. Next, Jobim expressed Brazil's belief that
defense strategy is inseparable from development strategy.
Noting the high percentage of technological advances
attributable to defense-related research throughout the
world, Jobim said that the only way South America will get
out of the "technological cellar" is for countries to work
together and begin jointly funding such research on a large
scale. Finally, Jobim stressed the importance of South
America speaking with one voice on defense issues in
international fora, using Haiti as an example of how the
world takes notice when the continent's military forces work
cooperatively toward a common goal.

¶5. (U) To secure political buy-in to CODESUR, Jobim stated
that he had personally visited with the heads of state of (in
order) Venezuela; Guyana; Suriname; Colombia; Peru; Bolivia;
Ecuador; Chile; Argentina; and Uruguay. All are on board
with the idea, according to Jobim, although he noted that

President Uribe required a visit by President Lula before agreeing to the concept. (Note: Embassy Bogota reports that Colombia has agreed to CODESUR, but only under the following conditions: 1) decisions must be consensual; 2) CODESUR must recognize only constitutionally mandated forces of each signatory nation; and 3) in its charter or declaration of principles, CODESUR must repudiate all violent groups, regardless of origin. End Note.) Jobim said that during the September 15 UNASUR summit on Bolivia in Santiago, leaders came "very close to finalizing the structure of the Council." He offered no further insights about when CODESUR might be formally established.

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Fourth Fleet No Problem
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¶16. (U) During a question-and-answer session following his address, Jobim was asked whether CODESUR would look to the U.S. Fourth Fleet as its "hypothetical enemy." If not, the questioner continued, who or what is CODESUR meant to defend against? Jobim answered that he had been personally briefed by Secretaries Rice and Gates on the issue, and he looks upon the creation of the Fourth Fleet as an internal administrative matter for the U.S. Government and of no strategic significance for Latin America. Jobim then added forcefully: "We have to move past the idea that the only way we can come together is if we have someone in common to hate." As for potential enemies, Jobim said that South America has none, but needs to ensure that the world understands that anyone wanting to use force in the region will not find it easy.

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Comment
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¶17. (SBU) The idea that a consensus-based defense policymaking body will function effectively for a continent that has not fully outgrown its historic rivalries appears unrealistic. Still, Jobim seems to believe Brazil has made considerable political progress toward the establishment of CODESUR, meaning we may soon see another addition to the already overflowing grab-bag of regional cooperation initiatives.
Baxter